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STATE FOR OES/PCI (TOKMAN), NEA/PD (FERNANDEZ AND AGNEW),  
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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [KPAO](#) [TS](#)

SUBJECT: TUNISIAN RESPONSE: COLLABORATING WITH  
PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM COUNTRIES IN SOUTH ASIA, NORTH AFRICA,  
AND THE MIDDLE EAST IN BASIC SCIENCE AND MATHEMATICS  
EDUCATION

REF: A. REF A: STATE 23320

[¶](#)B. REF B: 2005 TUNIS 2333

[¶](#)1. SUMMARY: Embassy Tunis welcomes the OES-led initiative to develop targeted activities in support of basic science and mathematics education, which are top priorities in Tunisia. Opportunities I-V, presented in reftel A, are all viable options for collaboration with Tunisian groups. In addition to the GOT establishments, science clubs, youth clubs, and the "Cite des Science" science museum are examples of private/civil society organizations that would also provide venues for this initiative. Embassy Tunis' Public Affairs (PA) section is supportive of this initiative and is willing to work with OES. However, given current personnel and budget constraints, PA will need additional funding to support in-country costs for advertising, outreach and project implementation. Since this will be one of our first projects in math or science for K-12, Embassy Tunis suggests further study of Tunisia's current K-12 curriculum before final implementation. As for specific suggestions on the best curriculum of mathematics and sciences courses to be offered, a more in-depth survey of the targeted groups would need to be undertaken before Post can respond accurately. END SUMMARY.

[¶](#)2. Embassy Tunis welcomes the OES-led initiative to develop targeted activities in support of basic science and mathematics education, which are top priorities in Tunisia. Both the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) have expressed interest in improving the teaching methods for these subjects. However, the MOE schools currently follow the European system of integrated math and science through grades K-12, which is quite different from the U.S. system. Both subjects are taught in Arabic until the equivalent of 9th grade, and thereafter in French.

[¶](#)3. Opportunity I: The MOE will be most supportive of programs that focus on capacity building for teachers and trainers, and that include supplementary materials. Curriculum reform is more sensitive, and the MOE is unlikely to welcome involvement in this domain. Science clubs, the university "technopoles," and other technical institutions are likely partners and have long requested assistance from the Public Affairs (PA) section at the Embassy. In-service teacher training centers at the MOE would welcome workshops and program development for teachers. PA has already discussed this with several of the MOE training center directors. There is also considerable interest in professional exchanges, however, Tunisian participation would increase dramatically if funding were provided.

¶4. Opportunities II, III, IV, V: Tunisian youth across the country have access, even in rural areas, to youth clubs which provide after-school activities and training. These clubs would be an excellent starting point in Tunisia. After-school sessions, or summer sessions would be most effective when using Arabic-speaking teachers. Face-to-face contact with a science & technology professional would be the most effective, followed by videos and other materials. It should be emphasized that for a youthful audience, videos must be somewhat entertaining to capture the attention of this audience, as many educational videos can be dull to young people. One suggestion would be to model instruction on the entertaining format of "Bill Nye, the Science guy," or some other entertainment-oriented program. Also, the secondary-level pilot project, "Virtual Schools of Tomorrow" in Tunisia is focusing on integration of technology with math and science.

¶5. Another area for collaboration is with the "Cite des Science," which is a science fair/museum in the capital of Tunis. This complex is under the authority of the MOHE, and a partnership with the OES program could reach beyond students to a large number of inquisitive and talented young people and adults, as the center is open to the public. Any proposal as to what should be offered needs to be cleared by the GOT to achieve buy-on of the program, and the Ministry must be able to clearly see the benefit for the groups involved.

¶6. On the civil society side, there is an organization called the Association of Young Scientists, which has worked collaboratively with OES on NASA exchanges (See Reftel B). They are active throughout the country and also have summer camps which offer instruction to Tunisian children. Any of the initiatives proposed in opportunities II-V would work in all these private and civil society groups.

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¶7. Embassy Tunis' PA section is supportive of this initiative and is willing to work with OES. However, given current personnel and budget constraints, PA will need additional funding to support in-country costs for advertising, outreach and project implementation. Since this will be one of our first projects in math or science for K-12, Embassy Tunis suggests further investigation/study of K-12 curriculum before final implementation. As for specific suggestions as to curriculum content of mathematics and sciences courses, a more in-depth survey of the groups we would work with would need to be undertaken.

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